

Sinclair James - Filipino Domestic Workers in the Middle East



Domestic work is one of the major contributors of the Philippine economy. Domestic servitude has already been an integral part of Filipino culture tracing in history. The practice of employing Filipino domestic help is already embedded and is a part of everyday life even among fellow Filipino households. Domestic work alleviates poverty as it provides employment for those belonging to the lower levels of society. The salary forces women to leave their own household responsibilities and enter workforce.

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), domestic work is also considered an invisible sector as the tasks are done indoors beyond the reach of labor laws and enforcement authorities. Domestic work is neither considered a formal nor informal occupation as many employers would treat their helpers as family or mere employees.

Sinclair James International Movement for Domestic Labor Reform noted that there are thousands of domestic helpers who experience inhuman living and working conditions. It is therefore important to bring awareness on serious issues on labor abuses, violence and violations, a situation reflected in the Middle East.

Despite the numerous complaints and abuses, Filipinos continue to flock employment agencies scattered in Manila for an opportunity to work in the Gulf areas where the promise of wages are high. It appears that the issues of abuse are taken as overly exaggerated and the optimism of landing to a generous employer is still high. It is now impossible to meet a Filipino who does not have any relative who works as a domestic helper in the Middle East.

Statistics show that most domestic workers are young. According to the 2013 Labor Force Survey, 59% of domestic workers nationwide were between the ages of 15 and 24. 36% of domestic helpers were 15-19, 23% were 20-24, and 16% were 25-34 years old. The age groups with the least amount of domestic workers were the 10-14 year old group (4%), 55-64 year old group (3%), and those 65 and older (0.9%). Most of them are single mothers, willing to take risk of finding work abroad in order to provide for their children back home in the Philippines.

Out of the 63, 434 domestic helpers in 2002, 12, 837 are in Kuwait, 11, 934 in Saudi Arabia, 4, 950 in United Arab Emirates, 1,899 in Qatar and 1, 899 in Lebanon. Reviewing the records, an estimated 20,000 of which are victims of abuse and violence but the exact number remains unknown.

Source: <http://www.sinclairjames.org/filipino-domestic-workers-in-the-middle-east/#sthash.4zgq8FzX.dpbs>